

Reaching Out to Spanish Speaking Audiences

Guide for Conducting Community Leader Interviews

Introduction

Community leader interviews are a very effective technique for learning about the Spanish-Speaking community. The technique is personal and informative and begins the process of building trust that is essential for reaching this community.

The Community Leader Interview has three main goals:

1. To gather information about the needs of residents of your community who speak Spanish.
2. To begin building relationships with leaders within the Spanish-Speaking community.
3. To identify potential community partners and collaborators to help you increase access to public access computers and general library services by Spanish-Speaking residents.

Community Leader Interview Process

The major steps in conducting community leader interviews are:

- A. Identify community leaders
- B. Set up interviews
- C. Conduct interviews
- D. Analyze & summarize the information
- E. Develop preliminary response or plan
- F. Set up follow-up interviews



A. Identifying Community Leaders

- Use the Community Resources lists in your packet to help you begin identifying potential community agencies, groups, and individuals to contact. Your goal is to identify community leaders that have knowledge of or experience working with the Spanish-speaking community.
- The leaders you interview do not necessarily have to be Spanish-speakers themselves. They must, however, be knowledgeable about the needs and issues of your community. They might have gained their expertise by working for an agency that serves the community or they may be community activists with a broad knowledge of community problems and issues.
- Not all types of organizations on the Community Resource lists may be represented in your area. You may already be familiar with some community leaders through the newspaper or other media coverage. Start with what and whom you know. Talk to other people in the library, your church, friends, neighbors, etc. who may have a personal connection with a potential interviewee. It helps to be able to say that someone they know referred you to them.
- Make a list of a minimum of 5 community leaders to interview. These are busy people and your schedules and deadlines may not coincide.

B. Setting-Up the Interview

- The sample process provided is intended to be a checklist for you rather than a script. You are starting a personal relationship so be sure you are as comfortable and informal as possible. Practice what you want to say before you make the first call.
- At the end of the interview be sure to ask them for additional names of people you should contact. By now the community leader knows you and what you are trying to accomplish. They can be invaluable in expanding your list of contacts. Be sure to always mention their name if you follow-up on their referral.

C. Conducting the Interview

- Even though the community leader may offer to come to the library or your office, make it a point to conduct your interviews out in the community. You want to see them in their milieu and you want others to start seeing you out in the community. Face-to-face interviews are preferable to phone interviews.
- The interview questions are intended as a guide. Be flexible and alert. The interview doesn't usually follow the simple 1-7 pattern of questions. Often the leader will answer several of your questions at once. If so, when you get to a question that the leader has already addressed simply summarize what they said and ask if they have additional thoughts on the question.
- Practice saying the questions out loud ahead of time. Rephrase them so that you feel comfortable asking them.
- Start by building rapport on a personal basis. The session should be informal and relaxing. Find out about the person, the organization and the background about key services and projects they provide before you start the interview questions.
- If someone they know has referred you to them be sure to mention this. Strive to make a personal connection immediately.
- The focus of the interview questions is to identify community needs and issues. The purpose of the interviews is to get to know the community from an insider's perspective. The focus is not to get the community leader's perspective on what the library should be doing to serve the community. That will come later. At the interview, your role is to acknowledge and tap into the expertise of the community leader.
- Take notes but do not use a tape recorder. Feel free to take the time to write good notes. Ask the interviewee to repeat if you missed something or rephrase what you thought you heard. The interviewee wants to help you get it right.
- If at all possible, end the interview by letting them know when you will be back in touch. Let them know that you will send them a copy of your findings, results, etc.

D. Analyzing & Summarizing the Interview

- Review your notes immediately after the interview. Sit in your car or outside their office and be sure you can read what you wrote.
- Transcribe and summarize your notes as soon as possible. Make a list of the needs and issues identified; highlight those that are repeated or mentioned more than once.

E. Develop a preliminary response or action plan

- Consider the needs and issues that you previously highlighted as being priorities.
- Carefully review your library's strategic plan and ensure that services for Spanish speakers are specifically mentioned in a library service response, goal, and objective. If the current strategic plan does not contain such language, do not wait for a new plan – Recommend an amendment now!
- In the context of the library's strategic objectives, evaluate which priority issues or needs found through the interviews, the library is best suited to address.
- With the support of your staff and administrators, formulate a preliminary action plan.

F. Set-Up Follow up Interview

- The community leader interview process is the start of a relationship. As a minimum, plan to meet with the leader at least three times:
 - The first meeting should be to conduct the interview and begin the relationship.
 - The second meeting should be a personal follow-up with the results/findings of your interviews and to get their input on your preliminary action plan.
 - The third meeting should be to get their help in marketing your activities, services to begin implementation of your action plan